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The Sensational SPIDER-MAN

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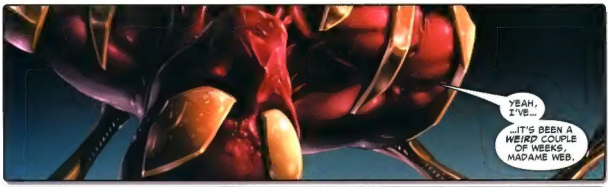
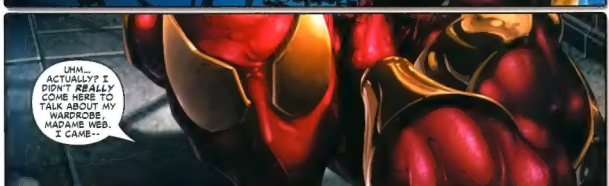

YEAH, I'VE...
...IT'S BEEN A WEIRD COUPLE OF WEEKS, MADAME WEB.

HNF.
AND YOUR COSTUME...?
GOT UPGRADED BY TONY STARK. HE THOUGHT--

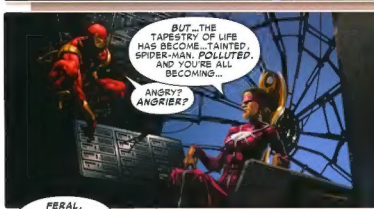
--I KNOW WHAT HE THOUGHT, YOUNG MAN, BUT... DO YOU?


UHM... ACTUALLY? I DIDN'T REALLY COME HERE TO TALK ABOUT MY WARDROBE, MADAME WEB. I CAME--

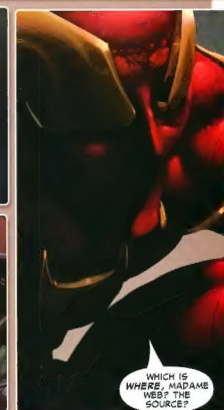
--TO SEEK MY HELP IN FINDING YOUR FRIEND CURT CONNORS, N'EST-CE PAS?

"THAT AND...
"...REED RICHARDS IS WORKING ON THIS FROM A SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW, BUT..."
"...YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY ALL THE ANIMALS HAVE COME OUT TO PLAY?"
"THE VULTURE...
"THE LIZARD...
"L' HOMME-LOUP..."
"MAN-WOLF, YEAH..."
AND...HE'S LIKE A RAT? A... SHREW?
...VERMIN? ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?
...AND YOU, WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU, TOO.
"AND THE BLACK CAT, YEAH.
"ANY IDEAS?"

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED BY A WEB, SPIDER-MAN... YOU, MORE THAN ANYONE, SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT...
INVISIBLE STRANDS THAT LINK EVERY LIVING THING TO EVERY OTHER LIVING THING...
THAT JOIN YOU TO ALL YOUR FOES...


BUT...THE TAPESTRY OF LIFE HAS BECOME...TAINTED, SPIDER-MAN. POLLUTED. AND YOU'RE ALL BECOMING...
ANGRY? ANGRIER?

FERAL, SPIDER-MAN. MORE...ANIMALISTIC. YOU LESS SO BECAUSE YOUR CORE NATURE IS... DECENT.
BUT EVENTUALLY... UNLESS YOU FIND THE SOURCE... YOU, AS WELL.


WHICH IS WHERE, MADAME WEB? THE SOURCE?

...NO, RIGHT NOW YOUR PLACE IS CHASING AFTER YOUR FRIEND...
GO WHERE NATURE'S THICKEST AND FIND THE LIZARD, SPIDER-MAN... AND THEN FOLLOW HIM TO THE INFECTION'S SOURCE.

Back in Midtown High, in mythology class, I learned that Cassandra was a blind prophetess who always spoke the truth.

Which means--for *ME*, in the *PRESENT*--that when Cassandra *WEBB* talks, *I* listen.

So I'm gliding towards *WHERE NATURE'S THICKEST*. Which, in New York City, has gotta be Central Park.

And...how *SWEET* is it that I can practically fly now?

(And not *THAT* weird since lots of spiders fly by *BALLOONING*. By spinning a thread that catches the wind and drags them up, up...up and away.)

Thank you, Tony Stark...

"...WHEREVER YOU ARE."
Couldn't stay in the Baxter Building with that CREEPY Reed Richards. Even though he WAS trying to help me. And even though it feels like--
--like my GUTS are on fire.
Like if I don't KILL AND EAT SOMETHING SOON--
OH, GOD--
--it's going to get very, VERY ugly.
HEY, CAT...
WHO?
...DON'T FIGHT IT. YOU'LL LOSE. TRUST ME AND... FIGHT ME.
P-PUMA?
YOU... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...
NO, I DO, CAT. THAT'S WHY I'M SAYING: FIGHT ME AND GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM.

WHERE... WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?
WH... WHY?
I'VE BEEN TRACKING YOU, CAT. I SMELLED YOU AND I STARTED TRACKING YOU... THIRTEEN BLOCKS AGO.

I PICKED UP THE SCENT OF YOUR FEAR... YOUR ANGER...
RELEASE IT BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING TERRIBLE.
WHAT?
N...NO.
YOU WANT TO.
DO IT.

NO. I--
I'M TELLING YOU. JUST--

BRAAGGGH!
...
‹PANT›
‹PANT›
‹PANT›
THERE. DOESN'T IT ALL FEEL...LESS DESPERATE NOW?
YE...
...YES.
THAT CALM WILL LAST FOR AWHILE, BUT THEN...
WHATEVER'S DOING THIS TO US, CAT, IT BUILDS UP IN OUR SYSTEMS...

"...AND THE ONLY WAY TO GET RID OF THE ANGER IS TO ACT ON IT."
CURIOUS.
WHAT IS?
YOU, JOHN, NORMALLY BECAME THE MAN-WOLF--
THIS IS NO "NORMALLY," DR. RICHARDS---
--BUT WHEN IT HAPPENS, IT'S BECAUSE AN ALIEN GEM-STONE TRIGGERS THE TRANSFORMATION.
AND YOU, BILLY, BECAME A SMALLER VERSION OF THE LIZARD THANKS TO A SERUM YOUR FATHER INJECTED INTO YOUR CIRCULATORY SYSTEM.
I GUESS.
AND YET...
...UPON CLOSE INSPECTION (AND REMEMBERING MY STUDY OF PALEONEUROLOGY IN HIGH SCHOOL), IT'S OBVIOUS THAT BOTH OF YOUR RESPECTIVE HINDBRAINS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED. THAT YOUR PROTOREPTILIAN BRAINS HAVE BECOME ENLARGED, TAKING OVER FUNCTIONS NORMALLY CONTROLLED BY YOUR CEREBRUMS.
MEANING WHAT, DOCTOR?

MEANING...NEITHER OF YOU MIGHT BE ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS, MR. JAMESON. MEANING...SOMETHING OUTSIDE EACH OF YOU IS AGGRAVATING YOUR...PARTICULAR CONDITIONS.
FASCINATING.
THE ENZYMES YOUR HINDBRAINS ARE RELEASING INTO YOUR BODIES...
...WAIT. WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT.
WHAT, DARLING?
...
SORRY, SUE. CONNECTING DOTS HERE.
IT IS WHAT YOU DO BEST
THE BAXTER BUILDING'S PROTECTED. INSULATED. THAT'S WHY WE'RE OKAY AND THE REST OF THE CITY'S...
RADIATION.
RADIATION WOULD AFFECT EVERYONE...TO GREATER OR LESSER DEGREES. BUT IT WOULD AFFECT THEM FIRST AND WORST...

"...THE MONSTERS."

MY TRIBE MADE ME INTO WHAT I AM, YEARS AGO. ALTERED MY BODY AND TURNED ME INTO THIS...*THING*.

WHICH I HAD--

--BELIEVE ME--

--I HAD IT UNDER *CONTROL*.

UNTIL --

I CAME TO NEW YORK ON BUSINESS...

...I'M A BILLIONAIRE, DID YOU KNOW THAT?

I WAS MEETING FIREHEART ENTERPRISES' BOARD...

"HIS WORDS WERE BECOMING SCREAMS AND I COULD FEEL MYSELF BECOMING...
"LIKE I WANTED TO LEAP ACROSS THE TABLE AND...AND...
"...AND THAT'S WHEN I LOOKED DOWN AT MY HANDS.
"I HAD SECONDS, A MINUTE...
"IT HAD BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME, AND THE PAIN...
"THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF HAIRS BURSTING THROUGH MY SKIN AT ONCE...BONES ELONGATING, MUSCLES THICKENING...
"AND THEN...
"...THE HUNGER..."

I TORE THAT MUTT TO PIECES, CAT. BUT AFTERWARDS? I COULD THINK AGAIN. I STARTED HEADING UPTOWN AND... PICKED UP YOUR SCENT ON THE WAY
UPTOWN? THAT'S WHERE I WAS GOING, PUMA. I DON'T KNOW WHY, I JUST WAS...
WE'RE BEING DRAWN THERE, CAT LIKE FLIES TO ROTTEN MEAT...
"WE'RE ALL OF US BEING PULLED THERE..."
THE LIZARD.
BEYOND REASON NOW.
ACTING WHOLLY ON INSTINCT.
FEELING ONLY ONE THING
NEED.
COMPLETELY UNAWARE THAT HE ISN'T ALONE
COMPLETELY UNAWARE THAT HE IS BEING--

--STALKED.
BY VERMIN
HALF-MAN HALF-RAT
THE LOWEST OF THE LOW!

YOU EVER SEE A RAT FIGHT?
IT ISN'T PRETTY.
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S RABID.
ESPECIALLY WHEN ALL IT FEELS IS--
HUNGRY.
HUNGRY/HUNGRY HUNGRY/HUNGRY.

ON THE ONE HAND, SOME DARK, HIDDEN PART OF THE LIZARD THINKS
"GIVE IN. LET GO. GIVE UP."
(IT ISN'T EVEN AWARE OF THESE THOUGHTS.)
ON THE OTHER HAND, IT THINKS-- REMEMBERS--
AND ITS WILL TO LIVE--TO SURVIVE--
--SURGES BACK.

RRRAAARRR!!
And scenes like THIS, ladies and gentlemen...
UUUUSSSAAAHHRRR!!!
SOMEWHERE, THERE'S A ONE-LINER ABOUT ME "CRASHING THIS LITTLE PARTY."
are why I need to get me some new friends.
OR IS THAT TOO OBVIOUS?
AND NOT TO NITPICK, BUT WEREN'T YOU DEAD?
EITHER WAY, I GOTTA TELL YOU--
--YOUR BODY ODOR? GETTING TO BE A PROBLEM.

AGAIN, I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING APPROPRIATELY CHEESY FOR ME TO SAY HERE.

GET IT, "CHEESY"? AS IN RAT'S LIKE--

BRRRRRAARR!!!

DOG, HI!!!

YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT MY NEW LOOK?

ARRGH!

YOU'RE THINKING "SO LAST SEASON."

YOU'RE THINKING "SO OTTO OCTAVIUS."

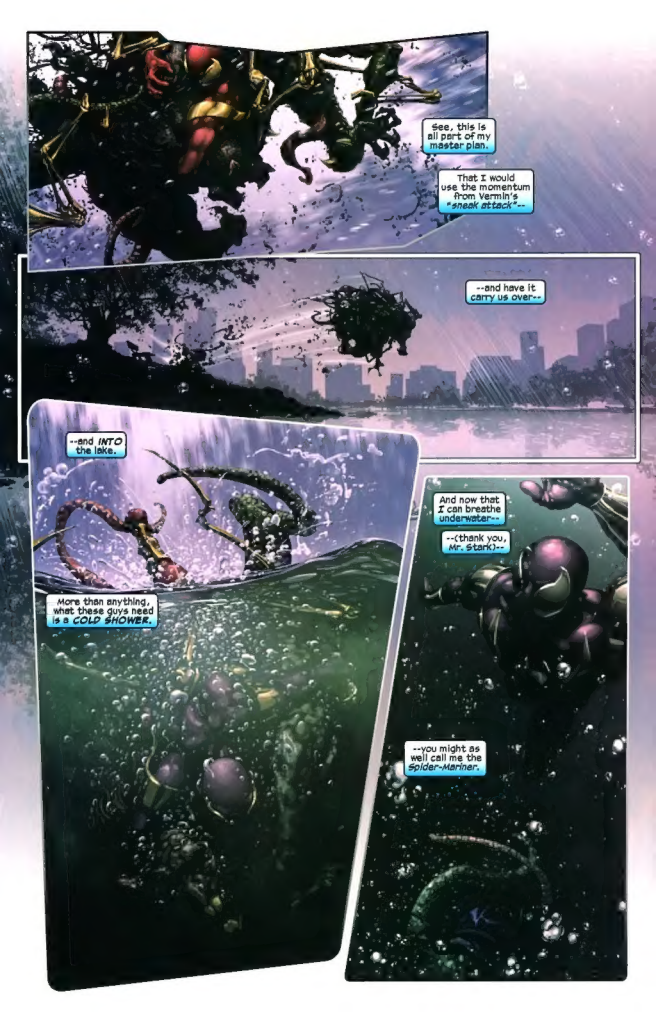
YOU'RE THINKING "WHAT'S WRONG WITH BLUE AND RED?"

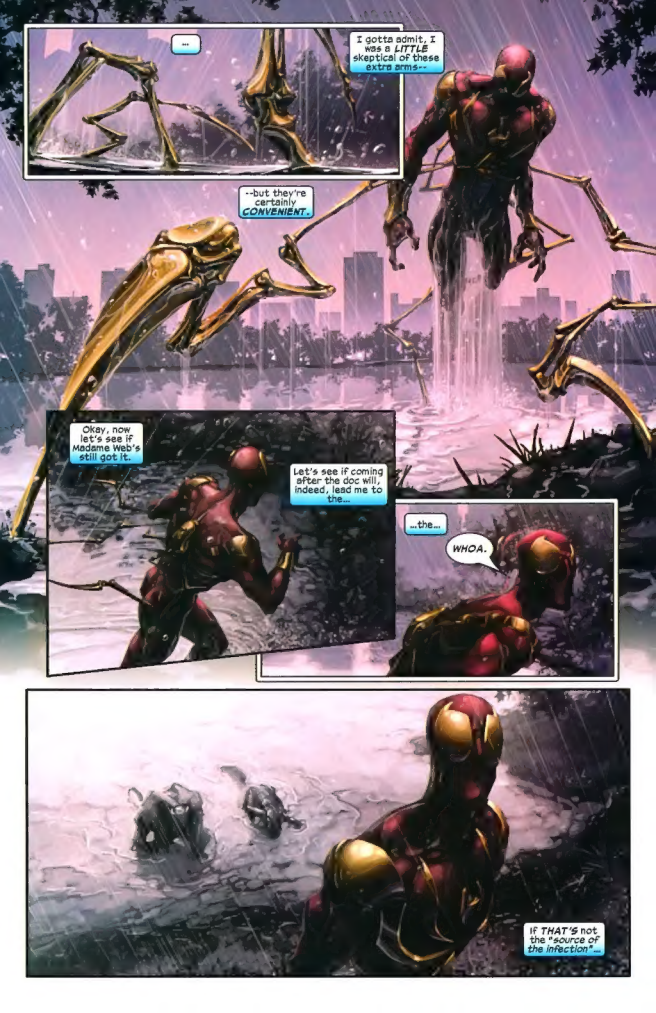
BUT I'M HERE TO TELL YOU--

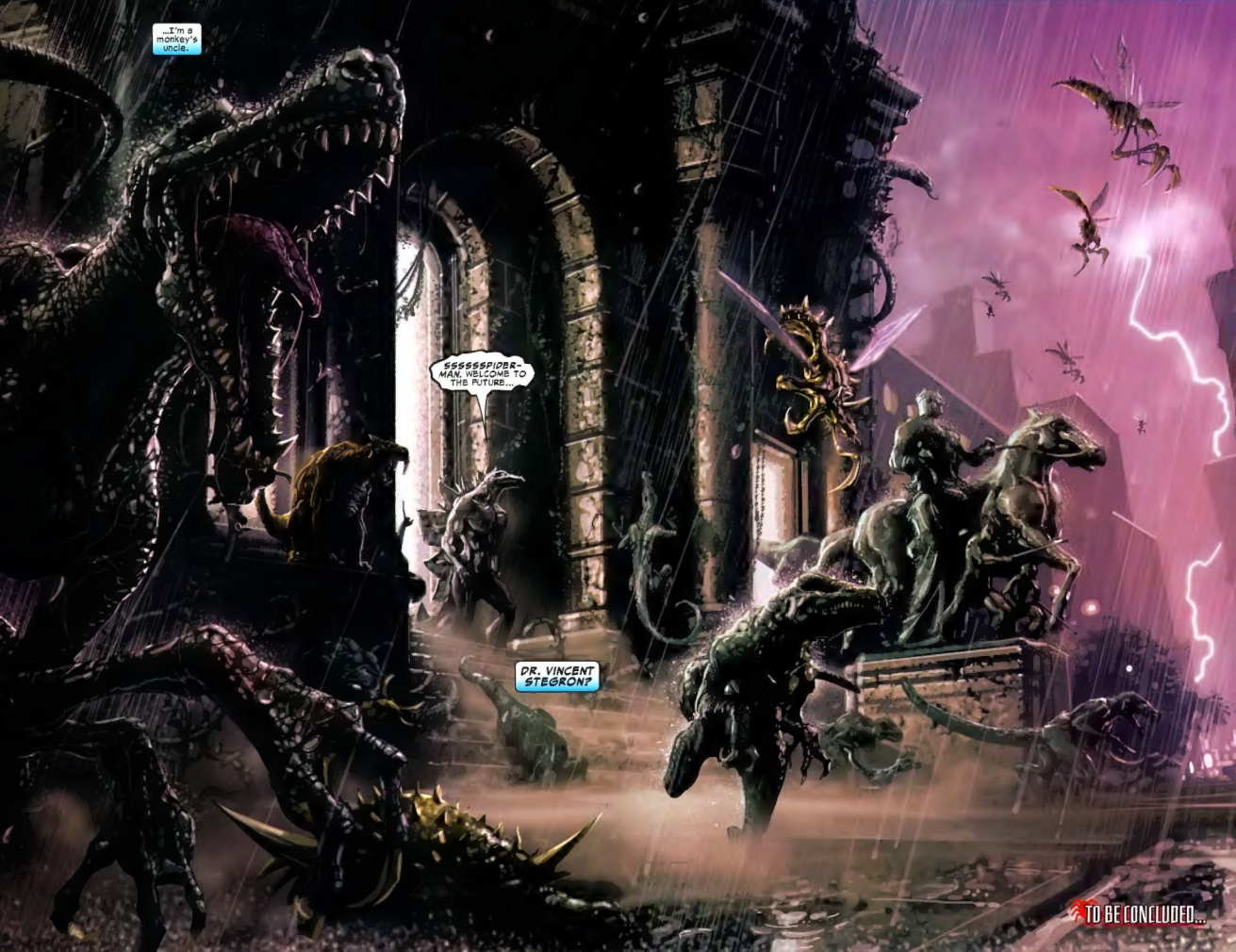
MRRAAGGHH!

I KNEW Vermin was gonna do that.

LUNGE at me.


See, this is all part of my master plan.
That I would use the momentum from Vermin's "sneak attack"--
--and have it carry us over--
--and INTO the lake.
More than anything, what these guys need is a COLD SHOWER.
And now that I can breathe underwater--
--(thank you, Mr. Stark)--
--you might as well call me the Spider-Mariner.


...
I gotta admit, I was a LITTLE skeptical of these extra arms--
--but they're certainly CONVENIENT.
Okay, now let's see if Madame Web's still got it.
Let's see if coming after the doc will, indeed, lead me to the...
...the...
WHOA.
If THAT'S not the "source of the infection"...


...I'm a monkey's uncle.
SSSSSSPIDER-MAN, WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...
DR. VINCENT STEGRON?
TO BE CONCLUDED...

KRYPTONIA-DCP